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A Tribute to Samuel Wesley Stratton

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IN paying tribute to the memory of Dr. Stratton, to his greatness and fundamental kindness of character, I would review those distinguishing traits, and those ideals which are his real personality and which will continue to live. I should like to speak particularly of three of his characteristics which have seemed to me most to distinguish him.

First, I would call attention to Dr. Stratton's unassuming and generous spirit. Before I knew Dr. Stratton intimately, I knew of this characteristic through my many friends who were among the younger members of the staff of the Bureau of Standards. They told me of the great personal interest which he took in their work, of his help and frequent major collaboration, yet of his refusal to take any personal credit for the results achieved or to allow his name to appear on the published reports. He had only two objectives, to get the results and to give the younger men every possible opportunity and encouragement. Once last year he told me a bit of his early experience which may, in part, explain this attitude.

Early in his career as a physicist he had collaborated (and done most of the work) on an experiment that attracted world-wide attention. The work was announced and published under the senior collaborator's name, without mention of the younger man. Though Dr. Stratton continued to love and admire that senior collaborator, this circumstance hurt him so deeply that he vowed to himself that he would never, in all his life, allow himself even to come under a suspicion of claiming credit for anything which might in any way be attributable to another.

The second characteristic which has impressed me has been Dr. Stratton's complete absorption in his work and plans. In one sense we may say that he was single-minded. This does not mean that he was narrow-minded, because this is far from the case. But all his interests were closely together in his main objective, which was the

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better development and utilization of science in the service of man, particularly in industry. For example, he was a connoisseur and collector of rare china, but this was but one aspect of his interest and activity in improving the ceramic art. He was similarly fond of rare and exquisite tapestries, but this again was associated with his work in bringing science to the aid of the textile industry. He was an enthusiast over tools of precision and frequently found his recreation in his workshop. But this was because he saw in tools an important agency for making scientific discoveries.

One of his two conversations with me since his recent return from England also illustrates this point. It had to do with the customs and organization of the English universities. He was particularly interested in the differences between their and our customs and organization, but it was very evident that he was thinking about these and weighing them as to their advantage or disadvantage with respect to the objectives of service by science to industry.

His second conversation illustrates the third and last characteristic which has impressed me more than all the others: the consistency of his life and thought. He had a definite ideal and objective. Everything in his life was valued as good or bad according as it led toward or away from this ideal. He was perhaps unsympathetic and certainly impatient with things or people whose influence ran contrary to his ideal. Anything which blocked the path toward the ideal irritated him, just as anything which led toward it received his full support. All this was essentially impersonal. It was only the consistent reaction of a mind so devoted and absorbed in working for the great ideal in which he whole-heartedly believed that no conflicting or ambiguous attitude seemed possible or worthy of defense.

In this second conversation to which I referred, he discussed the establishment and strengthening of certain lines of study and research whose treatment is complicated by lack of precedent or personnel. He had seen striking evidences of the importance and success of these lines of work in certain foreign countries and insisted that we must not let our precedents, regulations, or limitations of any sort stand in the way of making a rapid and important advance in these directions.

In all this we have a picture of a remarkable character. There are few men whose whole life has been so consistent, straightfor-

Edwin Anderson Alderman

ward, and unswerving in its devotion to a particular form of public service and which has been carried on with such a complete elimination of self-interest. We mark the passing of a great man. At the same time we recognize the lasting importance of those things which were the mainspring of his life.

In conclusion I want to add this very brief personal tribute. Having always respected and admired Dr. Stratton for his accomplishments and because of what I knew to be the feelings toward him on the part of his colleagues, I have come, during the past year and a half of close acquaintance, to love him, almost as a father. I have had the opportunity to go behind his reserve and make some contact with his rich and affectionate spirit which to know was to love.

Edwin Anderson Alderman

JOHN FINLEY

EDWIN ANDERSON ALDERMAN will be remembered most affectionately, most proudly, as the first president of the University of Virginia and with like term of immortality. Here the democracy which for him ceased to be a theory when he was a teacher in North Carolina and embodied itself in living form, became for him the "most fruitful idea in the world." Here he found the most interesting mental and moral exercise to be the effort to try to understand its currents as they flow in the life of this nation and to interpret it through the University and to furnish a free people what they most need—"an unending succession of honorable, capable leadership." He used to tell the story of a Virginia lady who hesitated to ask a stranger where he was from for fear that he would have to confess that he was not from Virginia—which would make an awkward pause in the conversation. But though Dr. Alderman was not born in Virginia he was as to the manner born. Even Virginia was proud to claim him and without any awkward pause. President Wilson said when search was being made for a president of this University that he must incarnate the spirit of the South and that the ideal man was Alderman. Dr. Curry's statement of Dr.